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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how Ball State University in Indiana provides accommodations for individuals with disabilities, including faculty, staff and students. The university's history of providing accommodations is traced from the 1920s, when members of the football team carried a student using a wheelchair up stairways to attend classes, through the 1960s when curb cuts on campus sidewalks were made, followed by the 1970s building renovation and program accessibility, and the 1980s, when intramural sports were modified so that students with disabilities were able to participate fully. The introduction of an infrared sound system in the main university performing arts auditorium when the national touring company of "Children of A Lesser God" came to campus is also highlighted, along with the development of a computer literacy curriculum for students with vision impairment. The coordination of the offices of Affirmative Action and Human Resources with the Coordinator of Adaptive Computer Technology to provide effective and meaningful accommodations for faculty, staff, and student employees is also discussed. (CR)

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THE 4 P'S OF ACCESSIBILITY IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHY, POLICY, PROCEDURES AND PROGRAMS

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Ball State University is located in Muncie, Indiana with a student population of approximately 18,500 students. Established as Indiana State Normal School in 1918, this learning environment has grown, both literally and figuratively through the years. For almost eighty years, Ball State has established a rich history of providing accommodations for individuals with disabilities, which includes faculty, staff and students.

From a legal mandate passed by the Indiana Legislature in 1917 to provide funding for readers for students who are blind, to the earliest accounting of accommodating a mobility impairment in the 1920's when members of the football team carried a student using a wheelchair up stairways to attend classes, Ball State has fostered an environment of accessibility and opportunity. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 served to strengthen the resolve of this institution in providing a quality education and work setting for all.

The philosophy of providing access and opportunity is based in teaching both those with and without disabilities the strategies necessary to empower and foster the highest level of independence possible. Even before available tools and resources are utilized, we address attitudinal barriers and attempt to create an environment which is inclusive and celebrates diversity on our campus. From the Board of Trustees to senior administrative staff, faculty, students, or the cook who works for dining services and the janitor who works midnights, every individual, whether disabled or temporarily able-bodied, has had the opportunity to be part of a cultural change in our society. It is our hope that by conveying this message across our campus, we will have a positive impact on our community. In turn, we hope our efforts and attitudes will be replicated in global communities by those who leave our campus for other academic and professional pursuits.

EC 306585

Policy is established at Ball State after careful research and consideration of the people who will be affected by any written mandates. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Office of Civil Rights decisions guide the process of policy development. Ball State consistently requires individuals with disabilities to self-disclose to the institution if they will be requesting services or accommodations. Current documentation is necessary in order to facilitate the process of providing effective accommodations in a timely manner. Each individual with a disability is required to make specific requests for accommodation, yet seldom does one individual at the University make a final determination of what will be provided. A consensus of several knowledgeable persons, i.e. the ADA compliance and Adapted Computer Technologies committees on campus, as well as a wealth of off-campus resources, can be utilized to provide the best possible solution for accommodation. It is critical to have written plans of action and implementation on file concerning how our institution will respond to disability issues. Likewise, people with disabilities have recourse through a detailed appellate process.

The embodiment of our institutional spirit in addressing disability issues is manifested in our various collaborative approaches. The teamwork approach is evident in our interdisciplinary committees, shared decision making procedures and the pooling of financial resources across campus and budgetary codes. The Adaptive Computer Technology Committee is an example of bringing diverse talents and perspectives together to achieve the best possible accommodations for faculty, staff and students with disabilities. The Committee is comprised of personnel from the Office of the President (Affirmative Action, Computing Services, University Libraries and the Teleplex), Academic Affairs (University College Learning Center and various Faculty members), Student Affairs (Admissions, Disabled Student Development) and representatives from each of the disability populations on campus. The committee also invites other knowledgeable individuals to contribute resources and information on an as needed basis.

For students with disabilities, a holistic approach is employed, as we realize they do not spend all of their time in a classroom. The complete collegiate experience involves living in the residence halls, studying in the library, using the computer labs, and participating in extracurricular activities and organizations.

The 1960's brought structural changes to the Ball State Campus with the Office of Facilities making curb cuts on the sidewalks and the initial attempt to make a residence hall accessible to wheel chair users. The University administration began moving toward a higher level of accessibility in the campus infrastructure. Today, there are TDD's available throughout campus, electronic doors and security provisions, accessible emergency stations, strobe lights fire alarms systems, tactile crossing indications, Braille signage, audible traffic signals, FM assistive listening systems, and audible backup signals on University service vehicles. Facilities also provides accessible transportation with on-call service across campus from 7:00 am until midnight when classes are in session. Accessible restrooms, elevators, parking. telephones, drinking fountains, By 1978, nearly ninety percent of the campus' classrooms were accessible.

In the early 1970's, Ball State formed the first ad hod committee to address campus-wide disability concerns. The Vice-President of Student Affairs established this coalition to assess needs and provide services on a more formal basis to a group of individuals who had few legal rights and were not held in high esteem by the majority of our society. Even before the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Ball State was aware of and acting upon the apparent needs of persons with disabilities. The inception of the office of Disabled Student Development in 1972 demonstrated the manifestation of the institution's commitment to access and opportunity. Ball State began to move beyond the need for removal of physical barriers and started to look to accessibility in their programs.

In 1979, a priority system was compiled by DSD and the Physical Plant office so that each building could be rated as to their need for renovation. As buildings were remodeled, accommodations were put in place and within seven years virtually all of campus was physically accessible. The advent of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 found Ball State close to full compliance with regard to physical barriers to those with mobility impairments. This era also brought the publication of "Classroom Adaptations for Physically Handicapped Students," which assisted faculty in finding

positive and workable solutions in classroom settings.

The 1970's and 80's began the analysis of accessibility in existing programs and the development of new programs to minimize the effects of a disability in the academic realm. The Learning Center was established to provide tutoring for all students in core requirement courses. They also provided tutoring for all classes for students with disabilities. This specialized environment of learning became the home of the adapted test center where readers, scribes and adaptive technology could be used for testing purposes. A full range adapted computer system is in place to assist the process of learning and testing.

With the majority of physical barriers having been addressed, attention began to turn to an inherent part of DSD's philosophy of integrating students with disabilities completely into the University environment. The development of a Speaker's Bureau in 1975 gave disabled students the opportunity to address small and large audiences to foster understanding between the able-bodied and those with physical or sensory limitations. Campus involvement included an Awareness Week and fund raising activities. In fact, the first lift-equipped was purchased with moneys raised from a Kenny Loggins concert on campus. Disabled Students in Action was revived and sanctioned by the University in the mid-80's as a vehicle for advocacy and awareness, as well as an outlet for social interaction.

Intramural sports has been an important aspect of disability programs at Ball State. With wheelchair football and basketball, goal ball, bowling, backgammon, billiards and swimming, students were able to participate fully in these events as equipment and rules were modified. Sanctioned and supported by the Department of Physical Education, a formal adaptive physical education program was launched in 1987, and it has grown into a minor in the academic department open to any student. Ball State's goal ball team has become a top ranked team in the country. The Physical Education academic department contributes with accommodations such as a blood pressure cuff with speech output and requests for tactile graphics of electrocardiograms for students with vision impairments in their classrooms.

The 80's introduced an infrared sound system in the main University performing arts auditorium when the national touring company of "Children of a Lesser God" came to campus. Through the information gained from a distributor traveling with the troupe and a generous local benefactor, Ball State began offering an enriched experience for those with hearing loss. Today, FM listening systems are available throughout campus and the Speech and Audiology academic department has become a valued resource to provide an array of services to this same population of the hearing impaired.

The late '80's found Ball State's Computer Science Department as recipients of a National Science Foundation Grant to develop a computer literacy curriculum for students with vision impairment and purchase the necessary hardware and software to be provided in the classroom. Working in tandem with University Computing Services, the first terminal was adapted in a campus access computer lab to provide visually impaired students a location to complete their homework. This program has expanded over the last ten years to provide access for all disability populations in over twenty locations on our campus. Training for groups and individuals, as well as administration of the program is the responsibility of a full-time professional position to coordinate the various aspect involved.

Technology is pervasive throughout the campus of the '90's. From Braille and large print production for pre-admissions visits, to job postings from Career Services in electronic media, to access to information from Disabled Student Development offices, to audio described and captioned videos in Bracken Library, information barriers have been considerably diminished, if not eliminated, with the use of information technology which is accessible.

The offices of Affirmative Action and Human Resources work closely with the Coordinator of Adaptive Computer Technology to provide effective and meaningful accommodations for faculty, staff and student employees. Requests for accommodations are evaluated by a team of knowledgeable individuals, who contribute information on providing accessibility and the appropriate means to deliver services and equipment.

The provision of auxiliary services is strengthened through the use of technology. The use of email distribution lists for students using each of the various services and the students employed to provide

these services allows the Disabled Student Development office to communicate with all students in an efficient and expedient manner. The use of email creates a system which is accessible to all disabilities through available technology on campus. The problems of playing phone tag are eliminated and students can submit requests or notify of problems even when the office is closed. Documentation is improved and allows for quick reference to dates and times. Text files have been created that can be easily modified or edited. Access to the university mainframe enables class lists to be checked for natural match notetakers. A list of available readers provides all the information needed to line up a read from the pool of employees. As with these examples and all others systems in place, the main objective is to promote independence and purposefully make students use technology available to them. It is our belief that both of these objectives will serve them well in the years to come beyond Ball State University.